2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

601 614 selves as the offspring of the mythical Omogoi-bai, in spite of the fact that they originate from his daughter, who married a Tatar or a Buryat.

583 591 606 To the end of the eighteenth century, there remained in vogue among the Yakut the custom of concession of wives. Formerly the bridegroom lived permanently in the house of his father-in-law, but in more recent times he lived there only for a definite period.

The *kalym*, or bride-price, replaced the system of marriage by capture. The origin of the *kalym* may be seen in the simulated enmity of the mother-in-law and the son-in-law.

583 587 837 842 A matriarchal system presupposes looseness of sex relations. The chastity of girls in rich families is not a question of morality but of *kalym*. The *kalym* for a widow or a girl who has had children is low. In the case of a widow, the belief in the right of the deceased husband may limit the number of wooers. A girl with a child, however, is sometimes preferred as a guaranty against barrenness which the Yakut dislike. In Yakut tales, the guest does not ask, "Where shall I sleep?", but, "Where do you put your guests?" and then they are shown to the beds of the girls. This is a form of hospitable hetaerism.

212 592 595 As the ancient Yakut had no written records, we know very little of their former life and particularly of their internal organization. Our information may be summarized in the following.

A household or yard was called *yal;* a group of individuals, who formed a family, as well as each member of the group, was called *kŏrgŏn*. The family consisted of blood relatives as well as of relatives by marriage: sons-in-law, wives (polygamy), adopted children, laborers, and slaves of both sexes. When the Yakut polygamist had several wives, he had several *yals*.

567 592 601 888 At the head of the family was the *aga*, meaning primarily "elder in age" and then "father." All the people of the household were regarded as and called by him "my children," "my sons or my daughters." Among these were included not only his own children, but also all relatives by blood and marriage, by adoption, by purchase (slaves), and any other dependents, as war captives. The *aga* continued to rule as long as he preserved his physical and mental abilities. According to a Yakut tradition, aged parents and also sick and crippled people, unable to work, were doomed to die and were even buried alive after three days of abundant entertainment.

181 888 Trostchansky, who lived as a political exile among the Yakut for about twenty years, characterizes them as egoistical utilitarians.[1] He

[1] Trostchansky, V. F., Notes on the Yakut of the Yakutsk District (*Memoirs, Imperial Society for Archaeology, History, and Ethnography*, vol. 27, parts 2–4, Kasan, 1911, in Russian), 97.

2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

says that aged people are not in favor; they are beaten by their own children and are often forced to leave their dwellings and to beg from house to house. They are not admitted by the rich and poor people force them to do hard work, like dressing skins (Figs. 17, 18), for every bit of food.

The Yakut look for brides for their sons not only outside of their clans (*us*, *nasleg*), but outside of the *ulus*, or union of clans. A girl, say the Yakut, is really a lot of aliens. This saying is reminiscent of the old time marriage by capture. Marriage is now also exogamic, but *kalym* (bride-price) is given in money, cattle, and other goods. Practically, the *kalym* may be regarded as an exchange of presents. What the parents of the bride receive from the parents of the bridegroom is almost equivalent to what they give her when she leaves their house. Often the bride carries with her cattle and goods of a greater value than her parents received that she may not be reproached by the bridegroom's relatives for bringing only a small dowry with her. The young bride remains under the protection of her clan and family. Many common law customs regulate disagreements and dissensions: If a young woman leaves her husband because she dislikes him, her dowry remains with him; but, if she accuses him of cruelties, relatives on both sides decide the matter. The Yakut do not like to appeal to the Russian courts.

We have previously mentioned the exogamic character of the Yakut marriages, but some other tendencies have been observed in the northern districts of Yakut Province. The few rich families endeavor to keep their horses, cattle, and grazing places within a certain group of families through marriage of close relatives, insofar as this is permitted by the Russian church. By special permission of a bishop, even cousins are permitted to marry. In one case, known to the author, a man lived with his niece, a marital relation forbidden by the Church, though his neighbors avoided mentioning this irregularity to strangers.

The old Yakut clan was governed by family representatives or a family council in which women very often played a conspicuous rôle. After the Russian conquest of Yakut Province, clan ties became less important and the family head more despotic.

The Yakut were warlike and blood vengeance between clans occurred very often, but reconciliation was often sought through payment of a ransom or by giving a girl in marriage, the best way to end hostilities. It was more difficult to compound assassinations within the clan. To kill the murderer would deprive the clan of another member and the punishment had to take the form of ransom, service, or public disapproval.

6: Sauer--124 G-5 (1785-94) 1802 Yakut
116, 156, 181, 557, 888, 623

"They are very revengeful of insults; nay, even entail revenge on their progeny: or do they ever forget a benefit received; for they not only make restitution, but recommend to their offspring the ties of friendship and gratitude to their benefactors. They are very obedient to their chiefs and oghoniors, [RCH: senior members of the group; see catagory 116, p. 117, footnote] and shew their attachment by frequent visits and presents. They are extremely hospitable and attentive to travellers, especially to such as behave with a degree of good nature, and very inquisitive and intelligent; for they ask questions freely, and answer any without embarrassment or hesitation. They are anxious to secure friendship and a good name, and seem to study the dispositions of such as may be of service to them, to whom they are liberal in presents, and even in flattery. They deliberate in council on all matters of public concern, as the course to be taken by each in the chase, &c. The oghoniors are surrounded by the rest, and their advice is always taken. I have never seen an old man contradicted or opposed, but always as implicitly obeyed as a father of a family. A young man ever gives his opinion with the greatest respect and caution; and even when asked, he submits his ideas to the judgement of the old."

18: Priklonski--82 [5] E-5 (no date) 1891 Yakut
116, 758, 763, 888

Yakuts and Tunguses have a peculiar fear of sick people who are facing death. The others leave the patient to his destiny without giving him the least help. The inhabitants of the Sagastyr island in the Lena delta, for instance, destroyed their yurtas with the sick in them and settled beyond the stream on the Kytach island. The Tchuktchis have a custom which is a little different and highly characteristic of their lacking sense of family. When an old man notices that his strength is decaying and that he is going to be a nuisance for those among whom he lives, he wants to rid himself of contempt and asks his eldest son to send him to his ancestors. In compliance with a sacred duty the son then places his father behind a curtain to spare himself the gruesome spectacle when he pushes the heavy knife into the father's heart.

19: Kharuzin -- 51 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut
116, 178, 888

Mr. Pripuzov informs us concerning the former custom of the Yakuts of killing their aged parents, which was done, according to the contemporary explanation of the population, as an obligation of Yakut sons, with the object of sparing their parents the sufferings of old age. Naturally, this custom, as well as that of the abandonment of newly born children by their parents, at present exists only in the realm of traditions.

the Yakut system of kinship is close to the systems used by a number of Turkic peoples. 609

The position of women both in the family and in public life was inferior. The husband, the head of the family, enjoyed despotic power, and the wife could not even complain of harsh treatment, which was a fairly common occurrence, if not at the hands of the husband, then at the hands of his relatives. A woman from another tribe, defenseless and lacking in all rights, was burdened with hard work when she became part of a new family. 562

The position of older people who were decrepit and no longer able to work was also difficult. Little care was shown for them, they were given little to eat and poorly clothed, sometimes even reduced to complete destitution. 838

The position of children, despite the fact that the Yakuts loved their children, as pointed out by many observers, was also rather unfortunate. The birth rate was very high among the Yakuts and most families produced from 5 to 10 children, sometimes as many as 20 or even more. However, the bad living conditions, poor food and inattention resulted in very high child mortality. Apart from their own children, many families, particularly those in which there were few children, often adopted children, whom they often simply bought from the poorer people. 853 [163] [165] 597

Newborn babies were washed by the fire in the hearth and rubbed with cream. This operation was repeated fairly frequently later on. The mother breast-fed her child for some time, as long as 4 or 5 years, although in addition the child received a horn of cow's milk. The Yakut cradle was a long box made of thin, bent pieces of wood, in which the wrapped baby was placed, strapped in and left for some time, without being removed. The cradle had a groove to drain away the urine. Older children usually crawled about the earthen floor together with the animals, either half-naked or completely naked, and were left to themselves; sometimes they were attached to the table on a long strap to prevent them from falling into the fire. The children of the poorer people were trained to work from an early age, and had to carry out work according to their strength—such as collecting brush in the forest, looking after smaller livestock, and so on; the girls were trained in domestic duties. The children of the toyons received more attention, were mollycoddled and generally spoiled. 854 [853] 855 184

The children had few toys. These were usually wooden figures of animals, tiny bows and arrows, little houses and model utensils, made by the parents or sometimes by the children themselves; and the girls had dolls with model clothes, blankets, pillows and so on. The games of the Yakut children were simple and rather monotonous. The absence of noisy group games is characteristic; generally speaking, when the children of the poorer Yakuts grew up, they were quiet and sluggish. 524

Religion

Even in the second half of the 18th century, many of the Yakuts had been baptized, and in the 19th century all Yakuts were registered as Orthodox. Although the transition to Orthodoxy was motivated by and large by material considerations (various privileges and grants for those baptized), the new religion gradually became part of their everyday life. In the corner of their dwellings there hung icons; the people wore crucifixes (the large silver crucifix-type embellishments worn by the women are interesting), went to church and many of them, particularly 771